

Standards for Court Operations of Communication Equipment and Programs

A. Standards for Internet and E-mail Usage

1. Electronic mail ("E-mail") and use of the Internet to access other computers are two valuable tools that improve the functioning of the court and the efficiency of its employees. Whether E-mail is transmitted internally between court computers or is transmitted to a non-court computer via the Internet, E-mail enhances communication capabilities. Similarly, use of the Internet affords court employees greater access to information, and it increases the ability of court employees to distribute information. All court employees are encouraged to use E-mail and Internet access (if provided) as a fast, efficient, and cost-effective means of communicating and sharing information.
2. Court employees must not misuse E-mail or Internet access. The court provides computers and computer access to its employees so that they can better perform their jobs. E-mail sent by court employees must be of a nature and tone that is consistent with the standard of conduct appropriate to the workplace, and court employees must not solicit or encourage others to send E-mail that fails to meet this standard. Similarly, all other file-sharing and communication across the Internet must meet this same standard of conduct.
3. For purposes of this policy, "E-mail" includes all electronic mail sent or received using court computer equipment, regardless of whether the E-mail is transmitted or delivered by means of a court local network, a court-provided Internet account, or a private Internet account. Likewise, "Internet access" includes all Internet access by means of court computer equipment, regardless of whether the access is through a court-provided Internet account or a private Internet account.
4. The primary allowable uses of E-mail and Internet access are:
 - a. The gathering, exchange, and appropriate dissemination of work-related information, research, analysis, documents, and software.
 - b. Communication and exchange of information for professional development: maintaining an employee's work-related training and education, and discussing issues related to the employee's court activities.
 - c. Activities to further the work of committees and professional societies which the employee has joined in connection with his or her court duties.
 - d. Announcement of new laws; new court decisions; new rules, orders, policies, and bulletins; new services and programs; and any other publicly disseminated court information.

- e. Applying for and administering grants or contracts for Judiciary research and programs.
 - f. Communication committed to E-mail in order to create a permanent record for future use.
 - g. Communications regarding intra-office announcements and activities.
5. Limited personal use of E-mail and Internet access is allowed to the same extent as personal use of office telephones. Such use should be kept to a minimum. Personal use of E-mail and/or the Internet must not interfere with the employee's work and must not result in additional cost to the court.
6. The following uses of E-mail and Internet access are prohibited:
- a. Use for any purpose that violates a law of the United States or a law of the State of Michigan.
 - b. Use for any purpose that violates a Michigan Court Rule, a personnel rule, or a court employment contract.
 - c. Use for any purpose specifically prohibited by the Chief Judge or Court Administrator.
 - d. Use which violates the security, privacy, and confidentiality policies, practices and laws of this court and the State of Michigan including unauthorized release of confidential material.
 - e. Use or access to the intentional display or distribution of files containing the following: obscenity, profanity, pornography; expressions of animosity or bias against individuals, groups or organizations; material in violation of regulations prohibiting sexual harassment or other non-businesslike materials.
 - f. For the intentional display or transmission of sexual images, messages, or cartoons, as well as the use of ethnic slurs, racial epithets or anything that could be construed as harassment, gender bias, race/ethnic bias, or bias against any protected class.
 - g. Use for profit activities (unless specific to the Mission or Vision of the Judiciary or other government agencies).

- h. Use to solicit for commercial ventures or political causes, or for private or personal business transactions, or for partisan or non-partisan political activities, or for political fund raising.
- i. Use for advertising or public relations activities not specifically related to court business.
- j. Use for playing of games or non-business computer activities which generate traffic or consume band widths on any local area network.
- k. Interfering with computers or computing systems, damaging software on other computers, or altering the software on other computers without authorization.
- l. Seeking or obtaining information about files, documents, or other data that are private, confidential, or otherwise not open to public inspection, unless specifically authorized to do so by the file owners; or copying, modifying, or deleting such files, documents, or data without authorization.
- m. Copying or downloading software in violation of copyright or license restrictions, or using evaluation copies of software in violation of license restrictions.
- n. Downloading software without screening it for viruses.
- o. Representing oneself as another without that other person's permission.

B. Standards for Usage of Telephones, Voice Mail, Facsimile Equipment, Interactive Video and Other Communications Devices

- 1. The primary allowable uses of telephones, voice mail, facsimile equipment, interactive video and other communications devices are:
 - a. The gathering, exchange, and appropriate dissemination of work-related information, research, analysis, documents, and software.
 - b. Communication and exchange of information for professional development: maintaining an employee's work-related training and education, and discussing issues related to the employee's court activities.
 - c. Activities to further the work of committees and professional societies which the employee has joined in connection with his or her court duties.

- d. Announcement of new laws; new court decisions; new rules, orders, policies, and bulletins; new services and programs; and any other publicly disseminated court information.
 - e. Applying for and administering grants or contracts for Judiciary research and programs.
 - f. Communication committed to a medium which will create a permanent record for future use.
 - g. Communications regarding intra-office announcements and activities.
2. Limited personal use of these media is allowed so long as it does not interfere with the employee's work; does not result in additional cost to the court; is kept to a minimum.
3. The following uses of any communication medium are prohibited:
- a. Use for any purpose that violates a law of the United States or a law of the State of Michigan.
 - b. Use for any purpose that violates a Michigan Court Rule, a personnel rule, or a court employment contract.
 - c. Use for any purpose specifically prohibited by the Chief Judge or Court Administrator.
 - d. Use which violates the security, privacy, and confidentiality policies, practices and laws of this court and the State of Michigan including unauthorized release of confidential material.
 - e. Use or access to the intentional display or distribution of files containing the following: obscenity, profanity, pornography; expressions of animosity or bias against individuals, groups or organizations; material in violation of regulations prohibiting sexual harassment or other non-businesslike materials.
 - f. For the display or transmission of sexual images, messages, or cartoons, as well as the use of ethnic slurs, racial epithets or anything that could be construed as harassment, gender bias, race/ethnic bias, or bias against any protected class.
 - g. Use for profit activities (unless specific to the Mission or Vision of the Judiciary or other government agencies).

- h. Use to solicit for commercial ventures or political causes, or for private or personal business transactions, or for partisan or non-partisan political activities, or for political fund raising.
- i. Use for advertising or public relations activities not specifically related to court business.
- j. Use for playing of games or non-business computer activities which generate traffic or consume band widths on any local area network.
- k. Interfering with computers or computing systems, damaging software on other computers, or altering the software on other computers without authorization.
- l. Seeking or obtaining information about files, documents, or other data that are private, confidential, or otherwise not open to public inspection, unless specifically authorized to do so by the file owners; or copying, modifying, or deleting such files, documents, or data without authorization.
- m. Copying or downloading software in violation of copyright or license restrictions, or using evaluation copies of software in violation of license restrictions.
- n. Downloading software without screening it for viruses.
- o. Representing oneself as another without that other person's permission.